El Paso families to learn about the internet

Parents Connected, a free program, invites

ThoughtSource, Inc. is bringing the Parents Connected team to El Paso and it promises to help parents learn how to use the Internet with their children. The team will guide parents through the basics, teach important safety guidelines, and show everyone present how exciting educational possibilities are.

The family event is free to the public and will be held Saturday, April 7, at Guillen Middle School, 900 S. Cotton. The seminars will begin with kids at 11 a.m. to 12 p.m., a break for lunch from noon to 1 p.m. with outside entertainment by Ballet Folklorico of El Paso.

From 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m., there will be a seminar for parents in English, while the Ysleta Middle School Braves Band entertains outside. For Spanish speaking parents, the seminar will be from 2:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. as the Guillen Middle School band performs in the patio.

Now in its inaugural year, the Parents Connected program is receiving rave reviews. The eight month nationwide initiative to narrow the "digital divide" by educating parents and teachers on the Internet is completing the 2000 fall schedule of the tour and is preparing for the Spring 2001 tour. To date, the Parents Connected team has visited seven school districts, including Miami-Dade, Broward, DeKalb, Atlanta, Jackson, New Orleans, and Birmingham.

The nationwide seminar tour is offered FREE of charge to parents and school districts . The seminar tour has been developed to meet the folowing objectives: To narrow the Digital Divide; to generate excitement about the Internet; To help parents introduce their children to a fun, interactive and safe experience online. The seminar outlines getting started, what is needed, the connection to the Net and basic features. Online Safety and Security lists safety for the kids, filtering software and Cyber Stalkers. There follows Family Friendly Activities such as Web sites for parents and children, Educational resources, and accessing your school.

The information provided is interspersed with funny skits and entertaining dialogue. The ParentConnected National Seminar Tour provides a series of shows in the participating districts.

The day starts out with a fun pep rally for the kids during the school day. The ParentsConnected t4eam gets the kids excited by discussing fun Web sites and shows the kids what opportunities they have for winning prizes if they bring their parents to the evening show (e.g., calculators and Web cams). The kids learn about the Net, followed by visiting the lab where they can practive what they hav e learned on computers.

The benefits will be in achieving recognition nationwide for the school district, help the community by improving parent-children relations, improve school performance by involving parents in their children's learning, and receive discounted products from sponsors.

ThoughtSource provides learning solutions for parents. Over the past two years the company has developed the Real P eople's Learning System, which combines motivation and humor with learning. Products include ParentsConnected: A family Guide to the Internet, The Real People's Guide to the Internet Book and Video set, and The Real People's Guide to Windows 98, Word & Excel video.

Hewlett Packard and Symantec proudly lead the sponsor list with Gear Up UTEP, The El Paso Collaborative, Ysleta Action for Youth, UTEP Educational Talent Search, Guillen Middle School,